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Letter dated 19 January 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a letter addressed to you by Abdullah Gül, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs (see annex).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 33, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Baki **İlkin**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 19 January 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As I have done in the past, I would like to share some of my Government's thoughts and concerns on Iraq with you.

We are again approaching a critical turning point in the trying process of Iraqi political transition. The first free elections in many decades are only days away. The United Nations mission, with its limited staff and scope, has been doing exemplary work. I have always stated that a clear United Nations seal on the elections would make its results more legitimate in the eyes of the Iraqis and beyond. The Iraqi authorities are similarly deploying great effort in the preparation of these elections.

But we are equally aware of the circumstances in which this popular experiment is to take place. Security, especially in central Iraq, is ever more elusive, and one large segment of Iraqi society is either unwilling or feels unable to take part in the elections. Turkey's own efforts to persuade this group to make a strong showing in this electoral process has also had a limited effect.

Thus, the results of the 30 January elections may well be below our expectations. When endorsing the current political timetable contained in Security Council resolution 1546 (2004), the objective of the international community had been, and still is, to transfer sovereign authority to a transitory government conferred by popular mandate. In simple percentages, these elections can still deliver that. But qualitatively, there will likely be a gap which will need to be bridged effectively later in the process. As the drafting of the new Iraqi constitution will get under way in the next phase, the participation of all Iraqis in this undertaking will become all the more important. Absence in the Transitional National Assembly should not result in exclusion from the drafting process. Turkey will work with the Iraqis, with the United Nations and with all players of the international community in helping to forge national reconciliation in Iraq up to the point at which the transition is brought to its successful conclusion.

On the other hand, we will have to deal, with equal resolve, with more immediate challenges that may stifle the entire project of a territorially integral, politically united, democratic and peaceful Iraq. These challenges manifest themselves in different ways. We have all along focused, and rightly so, on the security threats and terror posed by myriad groups. Those who see no future for themselves in a peaceful and democratic Iraq must be confronted in the most determined fashion. But defeating the physical threat alone cannot bring about the harmony we are all striving for. The inherent security of the Iraqi political and social fabric lies in the ability of all Iraqi groups to reconcile their own priorities and interests with those of Iraq as a whole. There is apparently a way to go on this account.

At a time when all of us are trying hard to help the common national agenda of Iraq to prevail over individual and sectarian ones, we see persistent efforts to the contrary. Despite the fact that no major clashes of an ethnic or sectarian nature have occurred so far, the international community cannot remain complacent about what it is witnessing now.

In this respect, Kirkuk is a case in point. Attempts to drastically change the demographic structure of the city and the province of Kirkuk continue unabated. There are certainly claims and issues to be addressed in conjunction with property ownership and resettlement in Kirkuk, as well as in a number of other places. The need to bring these matters to a satisfactory conclusion was also highlighted in the Transitional Administrative Law drawn up by the now defunct Iraqi Governing Council. However, what was suggested in that temporary document, and what should naturally be the way, is that these issues have to be settled collectively in Baghdad, in a national framework, and not through the illegitimate unilateral transfer of a sizeable population to the disputed areas and by taking hold of those areas by sheer projection of force. The latest accounts about the number of new settlers in Kirkuk are alarming, and are now estimated in the hundreds of thousands.

Because of the election law applicable for 30 January, this population shift may not have as much of an impact on the results of the balloting for the Transitional National Assembly as it would on province-level voting. It is worrying that certain political groups have been tampering with the demographics of Kirkuk to claim supremacy of power through elections.

An equally worrying tendency is an effort to turn the elections also into a referendum for independence in northern Iraq. A campaign with outside involvement has been going on for some time now, and most recently a group has also approached the United Nations to file a petition for such a referendum.

Let us be totally clear here. There can be no charting of Iraq's future partially. If those who instigate such an outcome invest in the hope that Iraq may after all not be able to hold together under the current circumstances, they will be making a fatal error of judgement. I am confident that the Iraqi nation as a whole will not allow that to happen. And, given the recent history, the Iraqi issue is not an Iraqi one alone. It has impacted, is impacting and will impact the region. And the region, as evidenced by two full years of the Neighbouring Countries Initiative, will stand firmly behind Iraq's integrity.

(*Signed*) Abdullah **Gül**
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs